the ROHMER REVIEW

No. 15

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Ascribe it to guilt or merely to the fortuitous availability of the necessary spare time, but here is another issue of the *Review* following close on the heels of its predecessor. As hinted at in #14, a large part of this issue is given over to illustrations rather than text. (That's one of the things that made it possible to produce this issue so soon.)

TRR's humor issue, #13, was well received by the majority of the readership, as the sample comments in last issue's letter column will have indicated. One very obscure touch in #13 seems to have escaped comment: the fact that the cover was a visual pun. Mike Vosburg's drawing depicts a *Mandarin*, right? And it was printed on *orange* paper, right? That much was intentional. What I did not discover until the material for that issue was delivered to the printer is that the manufacturer's name for that particular color of cover stock is . . . Mandarin Orange!

Two reminders are appropriate. Readers who have not yet ordered a copy of Julian Biggers's compilation, *English Locations in the Novels and Collected Short Stories of Sax Rohmer*, still have time to do so. The deadline for receipt of orders is October 8, 1976; the edition will be limited to the total number of orders received by that date. The cost is $2.50 per copy, plus postage (25¢ for book rate, 50¢ for first class). Order from J. L. Biggers/6103 Lynnhaven Drive/Lubbock, Texas 79413.

Second: readers who are able to get to Los Angeles on the weekend of October 1-3 cannot do better than spend their time at Bouchercon 7, the annual gathering of enthusiasts of mystery fiction, which will be held at the Pacifica Hotel (formerly the Americana---same hotel, new name). The guest of honor will be John Ball (author of "My Hero ---Fu Manchu" in *TRR* #11, as well as of the Virgil Tibbs mystery novels), who will participate in the program, along with such editors and writers as Larry Shaw, Otto Penzler, Hillary Waugh, Robert Bloch, Joseph Hansen, William F. Nolan, and others. There will also be films, radio programs, book displays, and a great amount of fascinating and informed conversation. Membership fee for the convention

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DANCING GIRL OF EGYPT

by Sax Rohmer

But as I entered softly in
I saw a women there,
The line of neck and cheek and chin,
The darkness of her hair,
The form of one I did not know
Sitting in my chair.
I stood a moment fierce and still,
Watching her neck and hair.
I made a step to her; and saw
That there was no one there.

--- Rupert Brooke.

One of my most interesting experiences occurred shortly after I had resigned a job in Fleet Street---at the urgent request of my editor, Sir Leo (then Mr.) Chiozza Money, strongly supported by his brilliant assistant, my friend Swinborne Sheldrake. I cannot pretend that I had set Fleet Street on fire, but I had created a moderately high temperature in the office of the newspaper which employed me.

Returning for a time to my first love, Art, I pottered idly about various schools. I sent black-and-white drawings to illustrated publications, but most of them were sent back. Those that were not sent back had been mislaid in the waste-paper basket.

I determined to try fiction, in which I had already dabbled without success. In fact, during this earlier attack on the fiction market I had a whole wall of my room papered with editorial regrets. In order to complete the colour scheme I sent one MS. to the same magazine three times. The third time they lost it.

Two short stories resulted---"The Leopard Couch" and "The Mysterious Mummy." Exhausted by this creative outburst, I went away on holiday. I was staying in Guernsey, and coming back one evening

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the Manchester *Empire News*, 13 February 1938.
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drenched to the skin (I had been caught in a thunderstorm) to my modest hotel, I saw two letters for me in the rack. The thrill which I experienced at that moment was one that I have never recaptured. You see, I had flown high, but had intended to work down the scale. To my profound astonishment I discovered that a leading London fiction magazine had purchased "The Mysterious Mummy," and *Chambers's Journal* [had taken] "The Leopard Couch."

This, I think, would have dizzied any youngster. I was [just] twenty at the time. I saw a rose-strewn path ahead of me; quite clearly I had mistaken my vocation hitherto. The stuff of genius was in me and I had failed to recognize it. How bucked I was! How vain we are at twenty!

On returning to London I determined to produce a novel. Magazine stories were beneath my dignity. I was deeply interested in Ancient Egypt---an interest which has remained---and I set out to write a romance of the days of the Pharaohs which should place me at one bound beside Rider Haggard, or perhaps Flaubert.

My knowledge of Egypt in those days was entirely based upon reading. As I learned later, it was scanty. But I began the great work---*Zalithea* it was called---with a courage which today amazes me. I wrote the first six chapters. It was a story of a daughter of Seti I, but early in the narrative she disguises herself as a dancing girl in order to penetrate to a banquet at which her lover is present. I got as far as the banquet without encountering any serious difficulty, and then realised that my Egyptology was failing me. In what sort of room would the entertainment be held? What did people eat and what did they drink? How were they dressed on festive occasions at that period? Above all, what did a dancing girl wear? Rather less than she wears today, the figures on the monuments assured me; but of what was that rather less composed?

At a late hour I abandoned Chapter VII of *Zalithea* and went to bed. And that night I was translated to Ancient Egypt... . In a dream I discovered myself to be one of the guests at such a banquet as I had vainly tried to describe. I had one foot in the conscious world---the other in Ancient Egypt. By this I mean that I recognised myself , and recognised the fact that the pages of history had been turned back for me---that I had been granted a glimpse of a feast in Ancient Egypt. At that banquet I must be a good reporter; I must absorb every detail.

Marking this experience as distinct from an ordinary dream are the following outstanding facts:---The room as I saw it, the mural decorations, the character of the guests and of the attendant slaves, their dresses, the wine, the jars which contained it, the fruit on large dishes---most of these things were new to me. In short, the scene was utterly unlike anything I had imagined; my authorities had misled me. Yet I lived to know, when my knowledge grew greater and I had visited Egypt many times and studied the life of that distant past, that the scene I saw was authentic in every particular.

Although, as I have said, I was one of the guests, none of them took the slightest notice of my presence. I was there, yet apparently an unseen spectator.

Costumes which hitherto I had known only in the conventional figures from the monuments marched around me in their surprising reality. The complexions of my neighbours were much lighter than I had supposed; and a spirit of childish gaiety dominated the place. It was a sort of courtyard or piazza, partly covered by a brightly-striped canopy of what appeared to be silk, but more probably was some vegetable fibre. Brilliant moonlight flooded the garden upon which one side of the courtyard opened, and a number of lamps were set in niches in the wall.

There was a painted or finely-embroidered curtain draping an opening almost directly in front of me, and at the moment that a chord of music came from this direction (several harps, apparently, and some reed instrument resembling an oboe) I realised that the company was exclusively masculine.

The curtain parted and a dancer came out. The story which I had been endeavouring to write was now being enacted before me! She wore a violet coloured robe of transparent gauze, which merely accentuated the lines of her body and limbs; arms and shoulders were bare, and she wore many bangles. An apparently endless chain of tiny pink flowers was wound around her hair, around her shoulders and waist, and terminated in a sort of floral girdle.

The dance was a series of postures, the significance of which eluded me. A few steps and she was very near. For some reason I was surprised to learn that she wore a heavy make-up: her lashes blackened and her eyelids darkened. Her hair was of a dull, lustreless red colour---dyed, as I realised. Her fingernails and toenails were stained and varnished. I could see the veins under her skin, and detect a faint perfume as the rope of tiny flowers swung immediately in front of me.

I drew back slightly . . . and woke up!

I found myself in bed, moonlight streaming in at the window. Half-right there was an armchair on which my clothes lay as I had thrown them when I had turned in. Just beyond, clearly visible in the bright moonlight, was a familiar chest of drawers. I was wide awake.

And between me and the armchair, as I lay, I saw a dancer! She was [as] substantial as any woman of flesh and blood, and she watched me with a set smile. The faint perfume was still perceptible. Her feet moving on my threadbare carpet in the slow steps of the dance, she drew nearer and nearer. By extending my hand I could have touched her. The background of the dream had gone, the scene, the company, the music; but the central figure was here in my room!

Rarely, if ever, have I been more terrified. I thought I had suddenly lost my reason. I sat up in bed, shrinking back further and further from that supernatural figure, trying to collect my

scattered senses, trying desperately to convince myself that I still dreamed.

The feat was beyond me. Indisputably the dancer was there. I could hear now the faint sound made by her bare feet as she twisted slowly on the carpet---the chink of bangles... . Cold perspiration trickled down my skin as I watched and watched, fascinated but terrified.

How long I watched I cannot say, but, as an opaque cloud slowly becomes transparent, to vanish at last in silver wisps, the dancer from Ancient Egypt dissolved. Through a series of all but imperceptible gradations, from firmly material to shimmering vapour, her body passed into invisibility.

We live in a know-all age, an age which has forgotten what Shakespeare knew: that there are more things in heaven and earth... .

Editor's Note: Readers of *Master of Villainy* will immediately recognize the dancing girl episode as the one recounted at the beginning of Chapter 4 of the book. The version reprinted above is in Sax Rohmer's own words, with somewhat more detail than the book version. It comes from the third installment of *Pipe Dreams*, the series of reminiscences which Rohmer wrote in 1936-37 and which were published in the Manchester *Empire News* between January 30 and April 17, 1938. ¤¤¤ Although the novel *Zalithea* was never finished, the title was not lost: Zalithea is the name of the title character in Rohmer's 1928 novel, *She Who Sleeps*.

MUSETTE, MAX AND SŪMURŪ

BY R. E. BRINEY & W. O. G. LOFTS

In addition to the several radio adaptations of the Fu Manchu stories, discussed in previous issues of this journal [*TRR* #11, #12 & #14], there were three other radio serials based on Sax Rohmer's work. One was an adaptation of a successful novel, a second was derived from a series of short stories, and the third was an original radio script which later became the basis for the first of a series of novels. All three serials were written for the BBC and broadcast during the 1940s.

The first of the three was a serialization of the novel *White Velvet* (1936). The story had originally been written as a movie scenario, intended as a vehicle for Marlene Dietrich, but was never produced. Instead, it was converted into a novel and published in book form without the customary magazine serialization in advance. The radio version consisted of ten episodes of twenty minutes each, broadcast on Monday evenings at 6:45 by the BBC Home Service. The first episode was broadcast on April 29, 1940. *Radio Times* for that date carried the following description:

> A serial play dramatised by the author from his novel of the same name, dealing with Secret Service---romance ---adventure in the shadow of an international drug ring.
>
> Master of Eastern mystery, there can be few writers living who can handle better the sinister stock-in-trade of jewelled daggers, hashish, sliding doors, collapsing rooms, and enigmatic Orientals than Sax Rohmer, creator of the immortal Dr. Fu-Manchu.
>
> *White Velvet* is a serial in the true Rohmer manner, and wastes no time in getting down to the job. Indeed, before the first installment is over you will be caught up in the underworld of Port Said, hard on the trail of drug-smugglers and jewel thieves.

White Velvet's hero, Lawrence Tabrer, was portrayed by resonant-voiced Valentine Dyall (b. 1908), whose subsequent career included service as the 'Man in Black' on wartime radio and, later, appearances in such films as *Henry V* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. In the 1950s Dyall appeared as special guest star on several of the *Goon Show* broadcasts.

The villain (or one of them), Faramy Bey, was played by D. A. Clarke-Smith, an old stand-by in Rohmer's dramatic endeavors. Clarke-Smith (1888-1959) had appeared in the stage productions of Rohmer's *The Eye of Siva* and *Secret Egypt*, and had taken the rôle of Nayland Smith in the Radio Luxembourg *Dr. Fu Manchu* serial.

The *Radio Times* announcement of episode two, on 6 May 1940, carried a complete cast list:

Musette . . . . . Cathleen Cordell
Lawrence Tabrer . . . . . Valentine Dyall
Faramy Bey . . . . . D. A. Clarke-Smith
Sitka . . . . . Betty Hardy
Hogan . . . . . Malcolm Graeme
Malados . . . . . Leslie Perrins
Kaspar . . . . . Alan Wheatley
Bruce Grimstone . . . . . Ivan Samson
Sally . . . . . Cherry Cottrell
Pa Kofmann . . . . . Ralph Truman
Ma Kofmann . . . . . Dora Barton

and Harold Scott, Ronald Simpson, Fred O'Donovan, Charles Mason, Bryan Powley.

(Cathleen Cordell appeared by permission of British National Films, Ltd. and Pascall Film Productions, Ltd.)

The script of the serial was by Sax Rohmer, who also contributed some of the incidental music. The producer was Howard Rose. The ten episodes and their broadcast dates were as follows:

Episode	1:	The Big Four	29 April 1940
	2:	The Scarab Brooch	6 May
	3:	The Port Said Custom House	13 May
	4:	The Apthorpe Diamonds	20 May
	5:	The Port Said Tragedy	27 May
	6:	Tabrer's Discovery	3 June
	7:	The Song of Fate	10 June
	8:	The Villa Malados	17 June
	9:	In a Turkish Garden	24 June
	10:	Musette Sings Again	1 July

The second of Rohmer's miscellaneous radio serials was something of a hybrid. It was a series of six brief plays, each based on a separate short story. The stories, originally published in *This Week*, were part of the "Crime Magnet" series featuring adventurer and detective Bernard de Treville. In the radio plays the character of de Treville was replaced by that of Gaston Max, Rohmer's French detective from *The Golden Scorpion* and other novels. The over-all title of the radio series was *Myself and Gaston Max*. The six plays,

29 Apr 1940

A SAX ROHMER SERIAL

The first instalment of *White Velvet*, a thriller by that famous writer of mystery stories Sax Rohmer, will be broadcast this evening at 6.45. Here is the 'Folies Egyptiennes' in the underworld of Port Said where you will first meet Pa Hoffmann and the glamorous Musette.

Illustrations from *Radio Times*

28 Dec 1945

Maitland: 'Don't turn, Donovan. Don't stop. Just go right ahead.'

An incident at the beginning of 'The Green Sapphire,' first episode of the new Sax Rohmer serial thriller 'Shadow of Sūmurū,' which you can hear at 9.30 p.m.

each fifteen minutes long, were broadcast on the BBC Forces Programme on Friday evenings at 6:45, from 14 August through 18 September, 1942. The part of Gaston Max was played by Carleton Hobbs and that of the narrator, Angus MacGregor, by James Woodburn. (Both Hobbs and Woodburn were primarily radio actors, though Hobbs narrated documentary films and Woodburn appeared in *Tight Little Island* and a few other British films during the 1940s.) The series was produced by John Richmond, and consisted of the following plays:

1:	The Black and White Bag	14 August 1942
2:	The Green Turban	21 August
3:	The Broken Eagle	28 August
4:	White Jackdaws Are Rare	4 September
5:	Count d'Ambro's Window	11 September
6:	The Kravonia Panelling	18 September

Sax Rohmer, Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, and Cay Van Ash each wrote two of the scripts, though all scripts were revised and edited by Rohmer before being broadcast. The original stories on which they were based, together with the dates of publication in *This Week*, are given in the same order as the above list:

The Black and White Bag	(12 Sep 1937)
The Mystic Turban	(13 Aug 1939)
The Broken Ikon	(19 Sep 1937)
The Elusive Jackdaw	(20 Aug 1939)
Count d'Ambro's Window	(9 Jan 1938)
The Mystery of the Panelled Room	(30 Jly 1939).

The reason for using Gaston Max as the leading character instead of de Treville is not known for certain. One plausible conjecture is that the de Treville character was not well known in Britain---only three of the stories had been published in England, and had aroused no particular enthusiasm---whereas Gaston Max was known as the detective in three highly successful and often-reprinted novels. In a conversation with the editor of this *Review* in 1969, Mrs. Rohmer said that it had been her idea to introduce Gaston Max into the radio series.

For further discussion of this series, see the commentary by Cay Van Ash elsewhere in this issue.

In the months immediately following the end of World War II, there was little or no market for magazine fiction in Britain, and Rohmer turned once again to the BBC. Although the character of Fu Manchu was too controversial---the BBC having no desire to offend Britain's Chinese allies---the standard Fu Manchu plot was still serviceable. Rohmer replaced the Devil Doctor with a female mastermind of indeterminate nationality, and produced *Shadow of Sūmurū*, a serial consisting of eight half-hour episodes. These were broadcast weekly on the BBC Light Programme on Sunday evenings at 9:30,

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THE EARLY CHRONICLES OF FU-MANCHU

BY R. E. BRINEY

Each of the first three book-length chronicles of Fu-Manchu was originally presented to the reading public in the form of a series of connected short stories, under an over-all title. In Britain these series appeared in two of the fiction magazines published by Cassell & Co., Ltd., while in the United States all three series appeared in *Collier's Weekly*.

The first two series consisted of ten stories each, and the same story titles were used for both the British and the U.S. publication. The third series consisted of nine stories in the U.S. version, but only eight of these were published in Britain; and the book version, which was in print before the magazine series had completed publication, contained a tenth episode not included in either of the magazine series.

Fu-Manchu		*The Story-Teller* [British]		*Collier's* [U.S.]
(1)	The Zayat Kiss	n° 67	Oct 1912	15 Feb 1913
(2)	The Clue of the Pigtail	n° 68	Nov 1912	1 Mar 1913
(3)	Redmoat	n° 69	Dec 1912	15 Mar 1913
(4)	The Green Mist	n° 70	Jan 1913	29 Mar 1913
(5)	The Call of Siva	n° 71	Feb 1913	12 Apr 1913
(6)	Karamaneh	n° 72	Mar 1913	26 Apr 1913
(7)	"Andaman--Second!"	n° 73	Apr 1913	10 May 1913
(8)	The Golden Flask	n° 74	May 1913	24 May 1913
(9)	The Spores of Death	n° 75	Jun 1913	7 Jun 1913
(10)	The Knocking on the Door	n° 76	Jly 1913	28 Jun 1913

There are minor variations in the way the titles are stated in the British and U.S. versions. For example, the punctuation in (7) is omitted in the British version, as is the initial "The" in (9). Notice that although the British series began publication several months earlier than the U.S., the two versions finished in a virtual dead heat, as far as on-sale date is concerned. The British hard-cover edition was published on 26 Jun 1913, the U.S. hardcover in September of the same year.

The Early Chronicles of Fu-Manchu

		The New Magazine [British]		*Collier's* [U.S.]
Fu-Manchu and Company				
(1)	The Wire Jacket	n° 75	Jun 1915	21 Nov 1914
(2)	The Cry of the Nighthawk	n° 76	Jly 1915	26 Dec 1914
(3)	The Avenue Mystery	n° 77	Aug 1915	6 Feb 1915
(4)	The White Peacock	n° 78	Sep 1915	6 Mar 1915
(5)	The Coughing Horror	n° 79	Oct 1915	3 Apr 1915
(6)	The Silver Buddha	n° 80	Nov 1915	15 May 1915
(7)	Cragmire Tower	n° 81	Dec 1915	17 Jun 1915
(8)	The Fiery Hand	n° 82	Jan 1916	25 Sep 1915
(9)	The Six Gates	n° 83	Feb 1916	23 Oct 1915
(10)	The Mummy	n° 84	Mar 1916	4 Dec 1915

The irregularity of scheduling of the episodes and the length of time taken to complete the series make it clear that the editors of *Collier's*, at least, did not regard the Fu-Manchu stories as parts of a serialized novel. For this second series, the U.S. hardcover edition appeared first, in February 1916; the British edition followed on 2 March 1916.

		The Story-Teller [British]		*Collier's* [U.S.]
The Si-Fan Mysteries				
(1)	The Flower of Silence	n° 114	Sep 1916	8 Apr 1916
(2)	Zarmi of the Joy-Shop	n° 115	Oct 1916	13 May 1916
(3)	Golden Pomegranates	n° 116	Nov 1916	24 Jun 1916
(4)	Queen of Hearts	n° 117	Dec 1916	25 Nov 1916
(5)	The Zagazig Cryptogram	n° 119	Feb 1917	6 Jan 1917
(6)	The House of Hashish	n° 120	Mar 1917	17 Feb 1917
(7)	Ki-Ming	-	-	3 Mar 1917
(8)	Shrine of the Seven Lamps	n° 128	Nov 1917	21 Apr 1917
(9)	The Black Chapel	n° 129	Dec 1917	2 Jun 1917

Again there are minor discrepancies in the episode titles. In the British series an initial "The" is added to (4), and (8) is given as "The Shrine of Seven Lamps." In the case of this third series both the British and the U.S. publication schedules were erratic. A possible reason for this is that the book editions in both countries were released in May 1917. The magazine editors may justifiably have felt that there was no point in completing a full series of stories which could be bought in a single volume in any bookstore, and so have finished off the series in their respective magazines in whatever manner was most expedient.

The book episode omitted from both magazine series corresponds approximately to chapters 34-36; if included in the magazine series, it would have been the next-to-last episode.

There is no clear-cut correspondence between magazine episodes and book chapters. Comparison of the two versions will show that

[continued on page 22]

Here is No. 1 of a Great Series of Sax Rohmer Stories dealing with the Yellow Menace. Nayland Smith and Doctor Petrie—all the Characters of the Earlier Fu-Manchu Narratives—will appear. This Series is Printed at the Earnest Request of Thousands of Readers who have been HELD by our Famous Author's Eerie and Amazing Mysteries

As Smith sprang upright in bed, eyes wildly glaring, I wrenched with all my might. Upward, I glimpsed a yellow hand, with pointed finger nails

The Second of this Amazing Series of Nayland Smith's Fights with the Yellow Group. The Most Weird and Eerie Mystery Stories Every Written. Each Narrative is Complete in Itself

The Si-Fan Mysteries

By Sax Rohmer

This Story Tells of Petrie's Visit to John Ki's Shop—

—And the Amazing Discoveries in that Den by Thames-side

Wooden tables, their surfaces stained, were ranged round the place. They accommodated groups of nondescript nationality

Long Complete Story by a Master of Mystery. One Step Further in Nayland Smith's Grim Battle with Fu-Manchu and his Creatures of the Orient

The Si-Fan Mysteries

"The House of Hashish"

By Sax Rohmer

I looked down upon a scene so bizarre that my actual environment was blotted out. About the room men were seated, fully half of whom were half-castes or Orientals

A Paragraph in the "Personal Column," and How Nayland Smith Followed up the Extraordinary Clues in His Fight to Bring About the Downfall of Fu-Manchu and the Fiendish Yellow Group

The Si-Fan Mysteries

"The Zagazig Cryptogram"

by Sax Rohmer

I bent over the prostrate form extended upon the table

Dramatic Complete Narrative of the Yellow Group, Demonstrating the Astounding Hypnotic Powers Possessed by a Mysterious Chinaman

The Si-Fan Mysteries

"Ki-Ming"

By Sax Rohmer

A soft voice, evidently that of a cultured Chinaman, spoke quite close to my ear: "Keep your eyes tightly closed, please, and I will help you on with this coat."

Snatching up my pistol from the table, I turned. Like some evil jinn of Arabian lore, Dr. Fu Manchu, surrounded by a slight mist, stood looking at me

By Mere Chance, Dr. Petrie Discovers the Secret Meeting Place of the Si-Fan and Witnesses a Momentous Gathering of the Oriental Officials of the Secret and Menacing Order

The Si-Fan Mysteries by Sax Rohmer

The Shrine of Seven Lamps

Around Dr. Fu-Manchu and his Yellow Group the Cordon Closes, Slowly but Surely. Here is a Complete Tale of the Hidden Chapel that Extended beneath Greywater—and the Dread Secrets It Contained

The Si-Fan Mysteries

A STORY OF GREYWATER PARK

By Sax Rohmer

Looking back along the passage, I saw, clinging to the mouldy wall, the most gigantic scorpion I had ever set eyes on

starting on December 30, 1945. The serial was produced by Noel Iliff, and the cast (as listed in *Radio Times*, 11 January 1946) was as follows:

Sūmurū . . . . . Anna Burden
Mark Donovan . . . . . Robert Beatty
Dr. Maitland . . . . . Ralph Truman
Inspector Ives . . . . . Arthur Bush
Philo . . . . . George Merritt

As usual, the episodes bore individual titles:

Episode 1:	The Green Sapphire	30 December 1945
2:	Tears of a Lady	6 January 1946
3:	The Dumb Man	13 January
4:	The Sleep Walker	20 January
5:	A Statue of Hamlet	27 January
6:	Serpent Woman	3 February
7:	The Tapping Stick	10 February
8:	The Shadow Passes	17 February

It was this serial which, having been converted into a novel, became the Gold Medal paperback *Nude in Mink*, published in England as *The Sins of Sumuru*. (The diacritical marks vanished along the way.) Although Sax Rohmer had no very high opinion of this first Sumuru story, it was so successful that he needed no urging to extend the series. Four further Sumuru novels eventually joined the first one. These five novels are now among the scarcest of Rohmer's books.

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The three serials just discussed were not Rohmer's only dealings with the BBC. In December 1938, before the serials were even thought of, Rohmer sold a short radio play, "The Peculiar Case of the Poppy Club," to the BBC for use on the program *What Happened at 8.20*. Rohmer himself was supposed to appear briefly on the program. (This episode is described more fully in *Master of Villainy*, p. 241.) A minor mystery arises from the fact that it has been impossible to verify any of the details of this transaction or to learn anything more about the play itself. The BBC claims not to have any record of it, and examination of the listings of the *What Happened at 8.20* program in *Radio Times* for an entire year after the date of sale has disclosed no mention of this particular play or indeed of any contribution by Sax Rohmer.

Rohmer converted this play into a short story entitled "Supper at the Poppy Club," which was offered for sale by Rohmer's British agents in 1941-42. There is no record that the story was ever sold, and no copy of the manuscript is known to have survived.

magazine episodes often end in the middle of book chapters, and there are minor discrepancies in the texts of the two versions. (Oddly enough, this is true also for the later Fu Manchu stories, which were written as book-length novels rather than story series.)

In December 1923, in response to requests from its readers, the British boys' paper *Chums* (also a Cassell publication) began reprinting the Fu Manchu series. The ten episodes of *Fu-Manchu* appeared in the weekly issues dated 8 December 1923 through 9 February 1924 (n° 1630-1639), and *Fu-Manchu and Company* followed in the next ten issues, from 16 February through 19 April 1924 (n° 1640-1649). Publication of the third series was delayed several months; it appeared finally in November 1924, with some of the episode titles slightly altered from their original forms.

		Chums [weekly]		[monthly]
The Si-Fan Mysteries				
(1)	"The Flower of Silence"	n° 1681	29 Nov 1924	Jan 1925
(2)	[no individual title]	n° 1682	6 Dec 1924	
(3)	The Golden Pomegranates	n° 1683	13 Dec 1924	
(4)	The Queen of Hearts	n° 1684	20 Dec 1924	Feb 1925
(5)	"The Zagazig Cryptogram"	n° 1685	27 Dec 1924	
(6)	"The House of Hashish"	n° 1686	3 Jan 1925	
(7)	"Ki-Ming"	n° 1687	10 Jan 1925	
(8)	The Shrine of Seven Lamps	n° 1688	17 Jan 1925	Mar 1925
(9)	A Story of Greywater Park	n° 1689	24 Jan 1925	

Chums was published in monthly issues as well as in weekly form. Each monthly issue contained four or five of the weekly numbers, with separate covers removed and the editorial and filler material slightly rearranged (and with color covers and possibly an interior color plate added). The dates listed above will indicate the approximate relationship between weekly and monthly numbers.

In the weekly issues of *Chums* the principal serials (there were always at least two running simultaneously) were printed in an eight-page section which was numbered in roman numerals (*i* through *viii*), independent of the consecutive page numbering of the rest of the magazine. This separate numbering was preserved in the monthly reissues. In some of the annual bound volumes and in many library files these separate serial sections were removed. The difficulties which this arrangement created for bibliographers and collectors can readily be imagined!

[A selection of illustrations from the *Chums* reprint of *The Si-Fan Mysteries* appears on pages 11-20 of this issue of *The Rohmer Review*.]

Ourselves and Gaston Max

BY CAY VAN ASH

What I have said in *Master of Villainy* about the early war years at Little Gatton---our state of isolation, making a kind of Shangri-La out of the place---was less of a fanciful exaggeration than it may appear. I was there for fifteen months, and during this time Sax rarely left the premises. Once in a while Elizabeth would insist that we all go down to Reigate for lunch. We then reserved a table at a local restaurant, called The Old Wheel, I believe, and went down in a hired car---Sax (somewhat against his will) carefully attired in a suit and furnished with money to pay for the lunch. Lunch over, we came straight back in the same car. Once or twice a week, Elizabeth and I went into the town for shopping. When there were business trivialities to be done in London, it was usually I who went up there and did them.

The contract for the BBC series *Myself and Gaston Max* was obtained in the only way, as Sax said (and pretty truthfully, I fancy), that anybody obtained a contract with the BBC. First he had to go up to London himself and entertain somebody to a diplomatic lunch. On that occasion, I think it was Val Gielgud. Getting Sax off to town for the day was quite a major operation. However, he duly went through with it and came back with an agreement for six episodes based on the de Treville stories.

Sax himself wrote the scripts of two of them. At the same time, Elizabeth and I each tackled two. Mine became the third and sixth in the series, "The Broken Eagle" and "The Kravonia Panelling." It was a good summer, and I remember doing most of the writing while sitting on the long terrace in front of the lounge windows at Little Gatton. Naturally, Sax subsequently edited and revised our scripts. "The Broken Eagle" was an adaptation of "The Broken Ikon" (published in England as "Terror in Council"). The plot concerned a gang of Russian anarchists who, at the time of the radio series, had to be converted into Nazi spies, so I had to find some equivalent symbol for the ikon. I thought the swastika too obvious so I settled for the German eagle.

The substitution of Gaston Max for Bernard de Treville was really little more than a substitution of names, with a few "Gallicisms" thrown in for characterization. In my opinion, it was not very satisfactory. One couldn't really imagine Gaston Max doing the things that de Treville did. The choice may have been made simply because Sax then had Max in mind as the detective in the projected novel *Seven Sins*.

I had nothing to do with the radio presentation of *White Velvet*. The script was probably easy to write, because the story had been conceived originally as a film script before being converted into a novel. Sax himself composed a few short musical themes for it, and actually had a recording of them on a metal disc. The only one which I remember clearly was a number called "Cold as Snow," which had a rather wistful melody. Somewhat curiously, neither of the songs mentioned in the book---"White Velvet" and "Key of Happiness"---was incorporated into the radio play.

Likewise, I did none of the writing for *Sūmurū* but, most unusually, Sax had a lot of discussion with me concerning the plot and characters. As a rule, he never discussed in advance things which he proposed to write. The only other occasion on which I remember his doing so was in the case of the ill-fated "Chinese Nightingale." His methods of attempting to make a writer of me were the same--- "Get something written first, and we'll discuss it afterwards."

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR *[continued from Inside Front Cover]*

is $6.00. Send to Bouchercon 7, c/o Moffatt/Box 4456/Downey, California 90241. Or just show up at the Pacifica Hotel any time after 5 pm on Friday, October 1st.

Decorations such as the one which appears above will be scattered throughout this and future numbers of the *Review*. They are taken from an interesting little book, *Egyptian Decorative Art*, by the famous Egyptologist, William Matthew Flinders Petrie. A facsimile reprint of this book recently was offered by Publishers Central Bureau (1 Champion Avenue/Avenel, New Jersey 07001) for $4.98; it is item #188252 in their catalogue. Another book by Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, was also listed at the same price (item #188260). There is a postage and handling charge of $1.50 on all mail orders. Another fine book offered by PCB is the *All Color Book of Egyptian Mythology* by Richard Patrick, containing one hundred high-quality color photographs with explanatory text. This book is priced at $3.98.

A few subscribers have expressed concern (engendered by the long delay between issues #13 and #14) that *TRR* might abruptly give up the ghost and cease publication. Rest assured that there are no plans in this direction. The principal contents of at least four future issues are on hand; all that is needed is time... .

"She Who Loveth Silence"

BY STEPHEN SHUTT

In Chapter XXVII, "Hermon el Bâhari," in Sax Rohmer's novel *Grey Face*, there is a reference to an intriguing secret society. The Egyptian Adept, Hermon el Bâhari, is speaking to Sir Provost Hope:

> "It is true," Hermon el Bâhari acknowledged. "Far as you have gone, you are not fit to know all; yet one unfit to know anything has grasped, and is wielding, powers which *I* dare not employ. It is this which I am here to tell you. I must be brief, for my time is short. You understand the series of seven cycles and why the span of incarnation is so strictly limited. You appreciate that a certain type of mentality, given properly directed study over a period exceeding that which is lawful, might acquire powers not meant to be wielded by any but the adept. This, then, has happened. There is, here in London, a man of superior intellect who has defied those laws which normally protect humanity from such phenomena. His studies have gone so far that he has even acquired one of the nine ultimate mysteries guarded by the group called 'She who loveth silence'!"

The name of this group, "She who loveth silence," interested me. At first I assumed that it was merely a tribute by Rohmer to H. Rider Haggard, with whose "She who must be obeyed" he was certainly familiar. As it turns out, however, this was not the source of the name.

In Dr. W. Max Muller's book *Egyptian Mythology* can be found the following passage:

> Mert-seger ("The One Who Loves Silence") was patroness of a portion of the Theban necropolis and was usually pictured in the guise of a serpent, though in rare instances she was represented also in human form like the great goddess Hat-hor. [Chapter VII, page 137]

A more accurate transliteration of the name of the goddess would be Meryet-Seger, while in the introduction to E. A. Wallis Budge's edition of the *Book of the Dead (Papyrus Ani)* there is a reference to "Mert or Mer-Segert . . . a name of Isis or Hathor as goddess of the Underworld." In any case, whenever the feminine determinative 't' is placed in her name, the translation "She who loveth silence"

is an accurate rendering. This is definitely one of the more obscure deities in the Egyptian pantheon. I have no idea of the source for Rohmer's association of a cult or secret society with her name. Perhaps the name merely appealed to him as connoting secrecy and mystery.

In view of the fact that the cobra was the personal symbol of Meryet-Seger, it is interesting to note that Hermon el Bâhari, in the chapter of *Grey Face* cited above, is described as wearing "a ring bearing a device resembling the head of a snake."

Meryet-Seger

Another interesting reference to this deity occurs in Mme. Isha Schwaller de Lubicz's intriguing novel *Her-Bak*. In Volume I, titled *The Living Face of Ancient Egypt*, Chapter XXII, the hero, Chick-Pea, is interrupted in the midst of his bucolic meditations by Pa-Bak, a scribe:

> "Hey, you there, Chick-Pea, has perhaps *Mersegert* bewitched you?"
>
> The dreamer lifted his eyes towards the scribe who had called him.
>
> "Welcome on our side of the river, oh Pa-Bak. Who is *Mersegert?*"
>
> Pa-Bak took a look at Chick-Pea and laughed. "You have studied the scriptures and do not know who *Mersegert* is? Listen then, for I am perhaps the only one who can repeat the word he has heard from a sage: *Mersegert* is the powerful cobra living in those caverns; she is the snake whose coils interlace in the mountain; she is the *goddess of silence*; but when her forehead succeeds in touching the sky, her name of perfection is 'The Summit' . . . Let us see whether *Mersegert* is going to explain this enigma to you!"
>
> And Chick-Pea replied: "I did not know her up to this very hour."

Her-Bak was originally published in French. The English edition did not appear until 1954, so as an influence on *Grey Face* it does not enter the picture. The book is an intriguing and by no means unsuccessful experiment, and manages to duplicate many stylistic nuances of ancient Egyptian literature. Volume I has been reprinted in paperback by Penguin Books [7110 Ambassador Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21207] at $3.95. The sub-title of Volume II, however, seems to indicate that Mme. Schwaller de Lubicz saved the best for last: *Her-Bak, the Disciple of Egyptian Wisdom.* We can hope that this will soon be made available in paperback. ●

From CAY VAN ASH, Tokyo, Japan:

I was very happy to receive TRR #14 a few days ago. Thank you for featuring my article on "The Search for Sax Rohmer." I was pleasantly surprised to note that the photograph had reproduced very well, although I considered it a poor one. It was actually raining when I took it, and the sky was about the same colour as the building. I remember that I had an umbrella held somehow or other in the crook of one elbow, but can't quite figure out now how I managed it. It seemed quite complicated at the time.

I was interested, but a little amused, by Jean Stafford's item on "The Polyglot Mr. Rohmer." It is always amusing to note other people's reactions to a brief encounter with Sax Rohmer. Like most, I fear that Miss Stafford was subjected to some of Sax's rather wicked leg-pulling. Sax never made any serious attempt at any foreign language other than Arabic, and never read his own work, even in English. Likewise, he wrote manuscript with a pencil---not a fountain-pen---except for a brief stage when he got a prototype ballpoint from the U.S.A. and used it till he ran out of refills. I searched all over London to find some, but was unsuccessful, after which he reverted to the pencil.

Mr. Nieminski's article on "Sax Rohmer in Chicago" provides interesting information and helps to fill in some gaps. He has evidently done some first-class research work. I wonder whether this might possibly lead to the discovery of a recording? We now know that Sax appeared before the microphone twice, and I think that the recording (on some kind of metallic disc) which he once owned, but which has now unfortunately disappeared, must have been his introduction to the first episode broadcast on the Monday evening.

As a feature item, I thought "The Third Eyelid" by Marvin L. Morrison very good indeed. Mr. Morrison not only provided a considerable amount of precise scientific information but also treated the subject excellently, playing our favourite game of make-belief in regarding Fu Manchu as a real person.

["Make-belief"? Interested parties, especially any who may be possessed of nictitating membranes on their eyes, will please note that these are the words of Mr. Van Ash and not of the editor of this journal. -- Ed.]

From JIM JONES, Vista, California:

Sure enjoyed the latest issue (#14) of *The Rohmer Review*. ¤¤ Among my fondest memories are the old radio shows. But as I recall, it was somewhere between 1934 and '37 that I listened to the radio

adventures of Fu Manchu, and on the Mutual network, not C.B.S. Perhaps these were transcriptions of the original series, or a later series. Or perhaps I am just not remembering correctly? I was between 6 and 9 years old at the time.

I so enjoyed Frank Hamilton's portrait of Fu Manchu---a marvel! Sure wish you would have more artwork by Hamilton.

[There may be more next issue, if the gods are kind.--Ed.]

From FRANK HAMILTON, Gloucester, Mass.:

For those who might be curious about the ideograms encircling the good Doctor's headgear [in the portrait on page 25 of TRR #14], I translate them thusly:

> "Man who wears words of wisdom on hat is in wrong position to observe same." ---Charlie Chan (after F. Hamilton).

From STEPHEN SHUTT, Havre de Grace. Maryland:

Congratulations on another excellent issue of *The Rohmer Review*. The new Tiki-motif in the heading for the Letters and Book News columns and the vaguely Mesopotamian [Try Javanese.---Ed.] creature on the back cover were interesting touches: you should keep them. Miss Stafford's sketch of Rohmer was delightful.

As for the other articles, my favorite is Marvin L. Morrison's commentary on the Devil Doctor's *membrana nictitans:* an exemplary job of research and presentation. Rohmer often used abnormalities or deformities of the eyes as part of the physical make-up of his villains; witness Fo-Hi in *The Golden Scorpion,* Yu'an Hee See in the book bearing his name, and the cat-woman in *The Green Eyes of Bâst*. Further investigation of this topic would make an interesting article for the *Review*.

I was somewhat surprised at your praise of Krepel's cover art for the new Pyramid Fu Manchu reprints. Of course, the main cause of my lack of enthusiasm is one which would not have occurred to you, in your blessed unfamiliarity with the television wasteland: Krepel's depiction of Fu Manchu is a nearly exact copy of Keye Luke in make-up for his role as Master Po in *Kung Fu*. I found Jack Gaughan's cover art for DAW's *The Wrath of Fu Manchu* to be infinitely superior, especially since the estimable Mr. Gaughan saw fit to restore to the Devil Doctor the visage of Seti I, while incorporating into his design an interesting (if improper) reference to *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

Rohmer's villain Fo-Hi was mentioned above. I think I may have located the source of this name. I recently learned that "Fo-hi" is a nineteenth century transliteration of "Fu-hsi," the legendary god-emperor of Chinese myth who taught his people the refinements of fishing and agrarianism, as well as being responsible for the trigram system of divination expounded in the *I Ching*.

By the time this issue of the *Review* reaches subscribers, only two volumes will remain to be published in the current Pyramid Books reissue of the Fu Manchu series. Both *Re-Enter* and *Emperor* will be included, though they will be published in reverse order. For the record, we present a checklist of the new editions. All are published by Pyramid Publications (a subsidiary of Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich), priced at $1.25 each, and have cover illustrations in a uniform design by R. Krepel.

The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu	V3945	Dec 1975
The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu	V3943	Dec 1975
The Hand of Fu Manchu	V3941	Jan 1976
The Daughter of Fu Manchu	V4024	Feb 1976
The Mask of Fu Manchu	V3942	Mar 1976
The Bride of Fu Manchu	V3940	Apr 1976
The Trail of Fu Manchu	V4070	May 1976
President Fu Manchu	V4056	Jun 1976
The Drums of Fu Manchu	V4030	Jly 1976
The Island of Fu Manchu	V4055	Aug 1976
The Shadow of Fu Manchu	V4053	Sep 1976
Emperor Fu Manchu	V3946	Oct 1976
Re-Enter Fu Manchu	V3944	Nov 1976

The extraneous *The* in *Daughter* appears on the spine and front cover only. Completists (whether of the books themselves or merely of the relevant information) should note that most or all of these editions have had Canadian printings in addition to the U.S. ones.

An addition to the list of Bookfinger reprints of Rohmer books will soon be available. This is a limited printing of the U.S. edition of *Tales of East and West* (originally published by The Crime Club, 1933): thirteen of Rohmer's best short works, including the novella "The Black Mandarin," "Curse of a Thousand Kisses," "Light of Atlantis," and "The Master of Hollow Grange." Subscribers to *The Rohmer Review* may obtain one copy of the book at the special price of $4.50 from Bookfinger/Box 487, Peter Stuyvesant Station/New York, NY 10009.

Tales of East and West is the eighth in Bookfinger's series of Sax Rohmer books. Most of the earlier books---including the first U.S. editions of the rare short story collection *Salute to Bazarada* and the little-known occult novel *Wulfheim*---are still available from the publisher. Enquire about the special prices offered only to *Rohmer Review* subscribers. Fantasy books by other authors are also available.

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The Rohmer Review is edited and published on an irregular schedule by

R. E. Briney
4 Forest Avenue
Salem, Massachusetts 01970.

Subscription rate for each series of three issues: $2.25 for Third Class mailing or $2.75 for First Class mailing; overseas subscriptions, $3.00. Not responsible for replacement of issues sent by Third Class mail.

Single copies: $1.00.

Back issues #12 and #13 available in limited quantities at $1.00 each, postpaid (Third Class). Issue #14 available separately at $1.00 or as part of subscription to the current series (#14-16).

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